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# TRANSLATION AND THE USES OF A HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY: ELIE WIESEL'S *LA NUIT* IN GERMAN TRANSLATION

PETER DAVIES

## Abstract

Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* is one of the iconic Holocaust testimonies, although the text has been most influential in its English translation. Recent work has begun to explore the issues raised by English translation of this text, but the German translation has as yet attracted little commentary. Employing a target culture-focussed approach that reads translation as a form of textual commentary, this essay shows how the German translation of *La Nuit* by Curt-Mayer-Clason, which was published in 1962 with a Foreword by Martin Walser, reflects a particular view of the text as literature, rather than memoir or testimony, and aims to make the text usable for the target readership.

Obwohl *La Nuit* von Elie Wiesel als eines der wichtigsten Zeugnisse von Holocaust-Überlebenden gilt, kam der Text aber erst in englischer Übersetzung zu einer breiten Wirkung. In neueren Studien gibt es Ansätze zu einer übersetzungswissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit den englischen Übersetzungen, aber bislang wurde die deutsche Übersetzung kaum untersucht. Anhand eines zielkulturorientierten Ansatzes, durch den das Übersetzen als eine Art Kommentar verstanden wird, zeigt der vorliegende Aufsatz, wie die deutsche Übersetzung von *La Nuit* durch Curt Meyer-Clason, die 1962 mit einem Vorwort von Martin Walser veröffentlicht wurde, eine

betont literarische Auffassung des Textes aufzeigt, die sich nach den Bedürfnissen des Zielpublikums richtet.

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PETER DAVIES

Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* is one of the iconic Holocaust survivor testimonies, having attained a status in the US matched only by the popular edition of Anne Frank's diary.<sup>1</sup> The text functions as a focus for discussion about the nature and purpose of testimony, the status of the Holocaust survivor in contemporary culture, about questions of witnessing and authenticity, and about the boundary between the testimonial, the autobiographical, and the literary. Accounts of Wiesel's work in the English-speaking world have often suggested that reading *Night* is an experience akin to a direct, unmediated encounter with the voice of the survivor: as Ellen Fine puts it, 'to listen to the witness is to become a witness'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Terrence des Pres describes the encounter with Wiesel's testimony in this way:

Having crossed the threshold of moral being by our reception of the survivor's voice, we are moved by a sense of obligation to pass it on, to transmit the survivor's testimony so that others may likewise be inspired and transformed.<sup>3</sup>

Leaving aside for a moment the question of what might be meant by 'crossing the threshold of moral being', it is clear that the insistent employment of the word 'voice' in these accounts not only suggests that certain perfectly normal questions to do with textual composition are unimportant, but also positions the reader in a particular way, as uncritical, emotionally engaged and ethically committed listener. However, we are

forced to ask ourselves how it is that such accounts of *Night* can fail to acknowledge that they are not responding to Wiesel's 'voice', but to the written words of his first English translator, Stella Rodway. In fact, the insistence on the importance of 'voice' in this sense makes consideration of translation effectively impossible; more than that, it actively prohibits it.

Wiesel's status in Germany is by no means as high: Primo Levi still seems to occupy the position of iconic survivor, perhaps because his work is easier to assimilate into the concerns of secular German intellectuals than Wiesel's Hassidic mysticism: Levi's work can be universalised and deployed in self-reflexive critiques of the European tradition, while Wiesel's religious concerns seem to spring from another world altogether. A certain blindness to the fact that Jewish mysticism is also a phenomenon of European modernity has ensured that Wiesel's writing has rarely played a central role in the key debates on the Holocaust and modernity in post-war Germany.

Nevertheless, since Wiesel has not been able to exert a direct influence on his own status and image in Germany, as he has in the US, he has also had less influence over the translation and reception of his work: this allows us to assess how *La Nuit* in particular has been translated and put to use to address particularly German concerns. This, then, is one of the two questions that I will consider here: what happens to our reading of a text like *La Nuit* when we take into account the issues raised by translation? The other question concerns the effect on the act of translation itself of the particular status that Holocaust testimonies enjoy: what attitudes towards the genre of Holocaust testimony are demonstrated in the published translations of *La Nuit*? Gary Weissman argues that the Holocaust serves as a site where particular processes of identification with the victims and identity crises can be played out in

dramatic form and be given meaning; critical readings of testimonies are affected by these processes in ways that readers are often not aware of.<sup>4</sup>

Discussing the US reception of the English translation of *La Nuit*, Gary Weissman traces critical readings going back to an important review by Alfred Kazin in 1960, which introduced *Night* to American audiences, suggesting that critics have often read the text reductively in terms of a lone, heroic male protest against God (an existential reading): it can be dramatised into a narrative that supports modern individual spiritual crises.<sup>5</sup> Discussion of the text then often places it in the context of a spiritual journey from darkness to light, which Wiesel's subsequent work is held to exemplify. Translators participate in the discussion as much as any other reader, and a critical reading that makes texts visible as translations allows us to show how translations, as a specific kind of interpretive reading, are themselves marked by these processes. In the US, the reception of Wiesel's work has shifted from an account of individual existential crisis to a contested status between moral universalism on the one hand and the uniqueness of Jewish suffering on the other. Are similar processes at work in Germany?

The purpose of this essay is to show how one can read the German translation as a demonstration of an attitude towards the text that reflects the status of Holocaust testimony in the target culture. In German, the translation by Curt Meyer-Clason has been repackaged several times since its first publication, and has been given a variety of generic labels, stressing at times the text's literariness, and at others its testimonial authenticity: this allows us to explore the relationship of translation, editing and genre through time in the German context. I discuss this publication history below.

The other reason for taking *La Nuit* as an object of study here is the exemplary status that the text has gained, most notably in the US through its English translations,

but also more recently in Germany, and to an extent also in France. Particularly in the US, discussion of the English versions of *Night* has become a key element in debate about the definition of the boundaries between the testimonial, the autobiographical and the literary; a debate that continues despite Wiesel's insistence that the text is not fictional.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, I will argue that the German translation reflects an attempt to intervene in the debates of the 1960s about a new, committed literature that faces up to the Holocaust, ensuring that the translation conforms to certain literary norms. The generic assignment of the translated text differs both between cultures and over time: in Germany, the text is assigned clearly to the genre of the novel from the start, and there is no difficulty in referring to *La Nuit* as, for example, a 'fiktionalisierte Kurzfassung' of the Yiddish text.<sup>7</sup> However, after the turn of the millennium, in the light of the increasing interest in Germany in life-writing and testimony, the genre assigned to the German text in its published form shifts from 'Roman' to 'Zeugnis', reflecting changes in the expectations that publishers and readers bring to Holocaust writing. I discuss this in greater detail below.

## TRANSLATION AND TESTIMONY

The status of the text as autobiography depends on the presence of extra-textual guarantors of a direct link between the first- (or occasionally third-) person narrator and a figure identified as the author: such guarantors might be the verifiability of events in the text against known facts established in other texts, public statements by the author in the name of the truthfulness of the work, and the text's own generic labeling, which asks us to take certain things on trust. Holocaust testimonies tend to

make extra demands on the ‘autobiographical pact’: since the origin of the testimony as a genre is in the legal depositions made to the trials of Nazi perpetrators (Wiesel uses the word ‘déposition’ to refer to *La Nuit* in his autobiography<sup>8</sup>), the reader is asked to accept the absolute identity between the witness to the event in the narrative and the writer of the narrative, and to accept the precise correspondence of described event and describing words. This is, however, a demand that is meetable only in theory, but never in practice, and the discrepancy can be the cause of some anxiety over the overstepping of boundaries and questions of truth and falsehood.

Translations of Holocaust testimonies are affected by these questions as much as any other mode of textual interpretation: Theo Hermans has produced a model for investigating translation that seems to me to be particularly helpful in understanding what happens to Holocaust writing when it is translated and read in translation. For Hermans, a translation is the demonstration of an attitude towards the source text, a performance based on a particular view of what translation is and means in a particular context, as well as a view of the source text itself. Translations also engage in an intertextual relationship with other translations, either by engaging in broadly accepted strategies for texts of a related genre and solutions to similar problems, or by taking up a polemical position in relation to them. The most frequent choices made by translators with reference to other translations and the discussion about them then crystallise into accepted standards which are bound up with value judgments about quality, appropriateness, readability, marketability, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Applying this thinking to Holocaust testimonies allows us to explore the way in which translators respond to and in turn affect the developing views of testimony and the status of the witness in the post-war world; we can show how translation, editing and publication practices demonstrate such attitudes in their representation of the



source text. We are able to discuss how translation prepares and makes the text accessible to readers in particular contexts without falling into the trap of seeing translation as an inevitable falling away from a sanctified original.

In this view, translations of Holocaust writing are a textual performance designed to demonstrate translation-specific methods that respond to current discourses about the Holocaust. They intervene in discussion of evidence, for example, translation's unique contribution being to make available for scholars and other readers testimonies of survivors written in many different languages (I am focussing here on written, rather than oral testimony, which raises a different set of issues). More than this, translations of testimonies are marked by some or all of the following issues: the continuing controversies over what can count as evidence in understanding the Holocaust in legal and historical contexts (documentation by the perpetrators vs. personal accounts by witnesses and survivors); by controversies over the assignment of testimonies to genre categories, which will also include particular pre- and proscriptions for reading and interpretation, and by anxieties about questions of narrative perspective, literariness and fictionality; by debates about the naming of the Holocaust for the purposes of study, contemplation or commemoration, and about its definition and isolation as a historical event separate from the history of the Second World War and the histories of individual European societies; by controversies about the uniqueness and/or universality of the Holocaust, its interpretation as a primarily Jewish disaster, and the status of non-Jewish victims; by developing definitions of witnessing and the nature of the survivor experience, in particular in the employment of language drawn from psychoanalysis and trauma theory; by changing notions of what it means to make a testimonial text accessible to readers, and what kind of experience the reader is expected to undergo in encountering the text.

Translations of Holocaust writing are a place where exchanges or confrontations take place between cultural contexts in which radically different solutions may have been found to the problems I have just listed. Expressions of concern about ‘loyalty’, about conveying the authenticity of the writer’s voice, or about the assimilation of a testimony to target culture requirements do reflect genuine anxieties about the status of the Holocaust and the survivor-witness in the different cultural contexts. However, since translation cannot take place without such exchanges, it makes sense to confront the issue head on, rather than perpetuating what Alan Mintz has referred to as the ‘principled indifference’ of Holocaust scholars to questions of translation.<sup>10</sup>

#### *LA NUIT / DIE NACHT: PUBLICATION HISTORY*

As all accounts of Wiesel’s work point out, the French publication of *La Nuit* in 1958 was preceded by the publication in Argentina by the Tsentral-Farband fun Poylishe Yidn of a memoir in Yiddish, entitled ...*un di velt hot geshvign*.<sup>11</sup> Wiesel’s French version of this text was finally published in 1958 in Paris by Les Editions de Minuit, in a revised and shortened edition made under the guidance of the editor Jérôme Lindon. This edition also included a ‘Préface’ by the writer François Mauriac, whose efforts on behalf of Wiesel’s text were instrumental in its eventual publication; this short piece, which recounts the now somewhat legendary details of their meeting, is an inseparable part of the text, and since it is always translated, it has played a vital role in interpretations of the text, particularly in its English translations. In almost all discussion of the text, it is the French edition, with Mauriac’s ‘Préface’, that is taken as the original, since it has formed the basis for translations made since.

This 'original' is complex, since it in fact contains three elements that are not wholly in harmony with each other: the French text composed by Wiesel, his editors, and perhaps also by the figure whom Wiesel names 'Nicolas', who helped with the translation<sup>12</sup>; the short French text by Mauriac; and the 'ghost' of the Yiddish text, which is always mentioned in critical discussion as the named, but unexamined 'origin' of the work. Wiesel's Yiddish text, which is out of print but by no means impossible to locate, has tended to function in critical accounts, particularly in the US, as a kind of shadow text beneath the French. In the most widely accepted account of the text's origin, in Wiesel's autobiography, he wrote a long draft of the text very quickly in 1954, after having kept silent about his experiences for 10 years.<sup>13</sup> The ghostly existence of this text behind the French, with the story of its rapid composition as a response to the irresistible return of repressed memories, serves to underscore the authenticity of Wiesel's account; this ensures that it is seen, ultimately, as the product of the emotional urge to testify rather than of literary invention or rational reflection, as well as connecting the text with memory of the destroyed Yiddish-speaking community that Wiesel describes.

This shadow text stands in a state of tension with Mauriac's 'Préface', pulling the main autobiographical account in different directions. While the 'vanished' Yiddish antecedent points to a specifically Jewish experience of the Holocaust written in a language now considered to be dying, Mauriac appears as gatekeeper to a broader reception for the text and a more universal interpretation of the significance of the Holocaust: his function in the text is to represent exactly the kind of sympathetic, trusting, respectful and morally committed non-Jewish listener whose absence is so often lamented in survivors' accounts, as well as providing the authoritative seal of approval for Wiesel's entry into French literature. However, Mauriac has an explicitly

Christian view of the meaning of the suffering portrayed in the text, which has been seen as a falsification<sup>14</sup>, though I would argue that, by making explicit the source of a particular reception of the text, it allows the reader to make judgments about it. Mauriac's text and the shadowy Yiddish text stand in a state of tension with each other, putting forward and simultaneously questioning possibilities of interpretation structured around a series of oppositions: Yiddish-French; Jewish-Christian (or Hassidic-Catholic); particular-universal; testimony-literature; inaccessible-accessible. It is this network of conflicting possibilities that will structure the translations of the text.

## QUESTIONS OF GENRE

In both English and German, *La Nuit* has appeared both on its own and as part of what is commonly referred to as a 'trilogy' with two novels, *L'Aube* (*Dawn*; *Morgengrauen*) and *Le Jour* (*Day / The Accident*; *Der Tag*). This packaging has been in part responsible for the confusion over the generic labeling of the text. The first edition in French was given the label 'document', though this became 'témoignage' in subsequent editions. Recent individual Editions de Minuit editions of the text dispense with labels, but place the title of the series 'Documents' prominently on the cover: the text is connected explicitly with other texts in this series, such as 'classics' of French concentration camp writing by Charlotte Delbo and David Rousset, and of the Résistance by Jean Moulin and Paul Eluard. Wiesel's text is placed in the context of French literary antifascism rather than specifically Jewish experience; by contrast, the translations of Wiesel's work are never either packaged or interpreted as part of

the French literary tradition.

The generic labeling of the translations has been variable, and tells us something about the varying status of the text, and about changing attitudes towards the nature of testimony. The trajectory of the German text has perhaps been simpler: since it was only available for some years in the context of the 'trilogy', entitled in German *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa*, it is the text's literary qualities that are stressed, and the unity of the 'trilogy' is emphasised by the fact that Meyer-Clason is the translator for all three texts, and that a 'Vorwort' by Martin Walser, which I discuss below, refers to all three texts as a unit.<sup>15</sup> This is not to suggest that *Die Nacht* was read as purely fictional invention (indeed, as we shall see, the piece by Martin Walser assumes that all three texts in the collection should be read as autobiographical), but that the literary and the autobiographical are not considered mutually exclusive at this stage in post-war German thinking about the Holocaust: *Die Nacht* can be considered a novel without this interfering with its value as a truthful document, and it is its literary quality that is seen as the key to its success.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, *Night* was first published in English in 1960 as an individual text, in a translation by Stella Rodway, only later becoming part of the 'trilogy', with the other two texts translated by different people.<sup>17</sup> Unlike in Germany until relatively recently, *Night* is usually taken in the US to be a text that stands in its own right, rather than forming part of a literary sequence, and it emerged into the US market without the association with literary autobiography or fiction that its packaging with the two companion novels might suggest.

*Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa*, with Martin Walser's 'Vorwort', was first published in 1962, in the wake of the sentencing of Adolf Eichmann, and just before the beginning of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of the mid-1960s, at a time when

public awareness of individual victim testimony was beginning to contribute to an increased German willingness to acknowledge the experiences of the victims of the Holocaust: the legal, rather than literary, context in which this testimony arose encouraged a desire for more documentary realism and testimonial directness. However, since *Die Nacht* had been read as a literary work, and was published alongside its companion literary novels, it was not discussed alongside eyewitness testimony, and was not printed as an individual text until 1980, much later than in English.<sup>18</sup>

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Wiesel in 1986 led to renewed interest in his work, and to the republication of *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa*, still with Martin Walser's 'Vorwort'. The cover text for this edition stresses the literary unity of the three texts by describing the texts as 'Teil 1: Nacht', 'Teil 2: Morgengrauen' and 'Teil 3: Tag', and by referring to the narrator of all three by the name 'Elischa', even though the narrator of *Nacht* is clearly addressed in the text as Elieser (a Germanisation of the French text's Eliézer). Even now, however, it takes until 1996 for *Die Nacht* to appear in an edition by Herder as an individual text, with Walser's 'Vorwort'<sup>19</sup>; here it appears with the generic label 'Roman', still stressing the connection with the literary packaging of the 'trilogy' and demonstrating clearly the very different status that the text enjoyed in Germany, as well as a lack of the anxiety about the relationship between the 'literary' and the 'authentic' that has characterised debate in the US about Holocaust testimony.

There are significant changes in the packaging of the new Herder edition of Meyer-Clason's translation of *Die Nacht* in 2008. Walser's 'Vorwort' has disappeared without commentary in the wake of Wiesel's open letter to Walser protesting at the latter's Paulskirche speech of 1998<sup>20</sup>; one could, however, also argue that Walser's

piece is clearly of its time and is no longer relevant for a new edition. The new genre label for the text is 'Erinnerung und Zeugnis', indicating a dramatic change in how the text is to be read: in the course of a decade, the text has been transformed from an autobiographical novel into a testimony: the aspect of fictional invention and concern with literary style has been replaced by a stress on eyewitness authenticity and memory, in order to place the text within the changing German memory landscape. *Die Nacht*, in Meyer-Clason's translation, now fits snugly within the boom in memoir and diary publishing since the 1990s, with its concern with directness and authenticity of speech, its focus on individual biographies and family histories, and tendency to retreat from political and historical complexity.

So, to sum up, *Die Nacht*, in the translation by Curt Meyer-Clason, has taken a journey from an autobiographical novel, in whose presentation and reception the literary quality of Wiesel's text is paramount, to an authentic, testamentary account of an experience that is characterised precisely by the absence of literariness and the non-fictional nature of the narrative. However, I will demonstrate that the translation reflects a complex of target-culture requirements that are very much of the time in which it was made.

#### WALSER'S 'VORWORT'

As I have indicated above, Meyer-Clason's German translation of *La Nuit* was for a long time associated with its literary context within *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa*. In fact, the packaging suggests a single text in three parts, of a reasonable length of 319 pages, rather than a 'trilogy' of three separate short novels: on its appearance,

*Der Spiegel* referred to it as a 'dreiteiliger Roman'.<sup>21</sup> That all three texts were translated by Meyer-Clason, by contrast with the three different translators in the English edition, adds to the sense of unity. It is the literary-autobiographical aspect of the text that is emphasised here, and the 'Vorwort' by Martin Walser, placed before the translation of Mauriac's 'Préface', takes as its theme the unity of the literary and the autobiographical, and in doing so, sets out a literary programme of its own.

Walser sets up a contrast between different forms of literary production in an attempt to define what he sees as a literature that is necessary in the post-Holocaust world. He suggests that, without the experience of the Holocaust, Wiesel would have become a 'chassidischer Geschichtenerzähler' (*Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa* 7), in other words, 'einer, der Geschichten nur erzählt als Beispiel oder als Frage an seinen Gott' (5). That is to say, he would have stayed in his 'chassidischer Provinz' (5) rather than writing literature in a language that is no longer his 'Muttersprache' (6). However, the extremity of the experience of the Holocaust leaves Wiesel no choice but to write in all honesty about the impossibility of shaking off the victim identity and the impossibility of 'Bewältigung'.

Walser's view of the narrative arc of the three texts is radically different from that of many American critics: for Walser, this is no story of survival, overcoming and recovery, but of its impossibility. Texts such as this serve to question the conventional formulae of reconciliation and mastery of the past, since the survivors' experiences refuse assimilation into processes of social purging and comfortable remembrance:

Was in Auschwitz und in Buchenwald getan wurde, kann nicht vergessen oder gar 'bewältigt' werden [...] Verzeihen, bewältigen, das ganze sozialhygienische Vokabular einer auf säuberliche Erledigung bedachten Gesellschaft wirkt grotesk,



wenn man in Elie Wiesels Aufzeichnungen Kenntnis erhält von dem verzweifelten und immer scheiternden Versuch des überlebenden Opfers, das bloße Leben wieder mitzumachen. (6)

Those who did not experience what Wiesel experienced inevitably write differently about it. Walser does not suggest that it is impossible, or morally objectionable for the non-survivor to write, but ‘wer nicht dabeigewesen ist und doch schreiben will, wie es war, der wird leicht zum Stilist’, in other words, a writer whose style one can appreciate, but whose style ‘verbraucht die Wirklichkeit, die sie aufnimmt, wie eine Nahrung’ (7). This may at times become ‘große Literatur’ (7), but it is also, in the Brechtian term, ‘kulinarische Literatur’ (8).

The survivor writes differently: he writes literature, not a factual account (‘er gibt keinen Bericht’, 7) but his work becomes a message: ‘Wenn er schreibt, wird das, was er schreibt, eine Aussage’ (7). Here, Walser employs Wiesel’s work in an attack on the proponents of abstraction and ‘pure’ art in post-war West Germany: ‘Dieses Wort [Aussage] ist bei den Feinsten zur Zeit in Verruf’ (7). Wiesel’s work becomes a weapon in campaign for a politically committed literature that shakes up comfortable assumptions about the relationship of the present to the past and about the role of literature: ‘Literatur als Mitteilung [...] [ist] die einzige Literatur, die notwendig ist’ (8). The value of this literature is guaranteed not by its style, but by the unity of author and work, which is itself the ‘Mitteilung’. The importance of this unity for Walser’s piece is shown by the ease with which he assumes that all three texts are autobiographical in a strict sense (5).

Just as Mauriac’s piece had performed a gatekeeper function, introducing *La Nuit* into French literature and leading it into an encounter with an essentially Catholic

argument about the meaning of suffering, so Walser employs it in an argument in favour of a committed literature that faces the Holocaust without false reconciliation: Wiesel's authenticity as a survivor acts as a guarantor for the authenticity of this literary direction.

The text is employed here in an argument about the function of literature in the debates of the early 1960s about the legacy of the Holocaust: here, the text is never anything other than *literary*, but it is an example of authentic, rather than inauthentic literature. The translation reflects these concerns in the attitude it takes towards the structure of the text and towards Wiesel's style: I would argue that it represents an attempt to show that this is a literary text in a sense that the German readers of the time will accept. In other words, as Walser makes the text useful for a contemporary literary argument, so the translation enables the German reader to perceive the text as literary.

## THE TRANSLATION

### Dramatising the arrival at the Auschwitz *Stammlager*

In discussing the translation, I will start with a small, but revealing detail concerning the now famous slogan over the entrance to the Auschwitz *Stammlager*, 'Arbeit macht frei', which Wiesel describes passing through on his arrival from Auschwitz-Birkenau. The French text renders it as 'Le travail, c'est la liberté!' (*Nuit* 68), without providing the German words, but adding an exclamation mark that functions as a narrative commentary on the situation, since it is not present on the original sign.

Stella Rodway's English version adopts a similar strategy, keeping the exclamation mark and adding a further emphatic translator's commentary through italics, opting for '*Work is liberty!*' (*Night* 52). Meyer-Clason's version simply translates the French back into German, along with the exclamation mark, and without reference to the original German slogan: 'Arbeit ist Freiheit!' (*Nacht* 64).

This seems extraordinary from a contemporary point of view, where the words 'Arbeit macht frei' are almost universally recognisable in Europe and the US. However, it shows us that this particular iconic image of the Nazi genocide that we take for granted had not settled into its current form by the early 1960s, at least not in Germany. At first glance it is surprising that this phrase has not been revised in recent editions. However, it tells us something particular about this translation: it is a literary translation of the literary French text produced by Wiesel in collaboration with Jérôme Lindon, rather than aspiring to the status of testimony or document. The translation was made without reference to extra-textual material, the text itself being considered sufficient and containing its own truth as a literary-autobiographical narrative. 'Loyalty' to the original is not automatically the same as 'loyalty' to historical accuracy.

The French text does show signs of checking against documentary material in making the translation from Yiddish. For example, the narrator's arrival at the Auschwitz *Stammlager* was originally narrated in this way:

nokh a por tsendlek minut un dos oyg khapt oyf fundosnay elektrishe tsoymen. a lager. a frisher lager. ot, der ayserner toyer. an oyfshrift hengt oyf im: arbet makht fray!

der lager shteyt, hayst es, untern tsaykhn fun ironie.

oyshvits. (*velt* 84)

[A few minutes more and the eye once more catches sight of electric fences. A camp. A new camp. There, the iron gate. An inscription hangs on it: Arbeit macht frei!

It appears that the camp stands under the sign of irony.

Auschwitz.]

The French version carefully responds to the Yiddish by providing a more precise description of how the famous gate looks, suggesting perhaps that photographs have been referred to: ‘Mais à peine eut-on marché quelques instants qu’on aperçut les barbelés d’un autre camp. Une porte en fer avec, *au-dessus*, cette inscription: “Le travail, c’est la liberté!” Auschwitz’ [My emphasis]. Meyer-Clason misses this detail, indicating again that his translation has a literary, rather than a documentary purpose: ‘Aber kaum waren wir einige Schritte marschiert, als wir den Drahtverhau eines neuen Lagers erblickten. Außerdem eine eiserne Tür mit der Aufschrift: “Arbeit ist Freiheit!” Auschwitz’. ‘Außerdem’ connects this sentence with what came before – what the column of prisoners saw on their approach to the camp – and is characteristic of a strategy that tries to ‘smooth over’ the abruptness of Wiesel’s French style.

Furthermore, Meyer-Clason makes other choices that indicate that he has not referred to documentary evidence in rendering the description of the entrance to the *Stammlager*. For example, the French text renders the Yiddish ‘toyer’ (gate) as ‘porte’ (*Nuit* 68), which can suggest both ‘gate’ and ‘door’: Meyer-Clason has selected the word ‘Tür’ (*Nacht* 64) rather than other words that might convey more precisely the size of the entrance gate.

Another feature of the translations of this particular episode in the text is the tightening up and dramatisation of the narrative. The French text dispenses with the dramatic rendering of direct speech in the Yiddish, as the inmates approach the gate ('a lager. a frisher lager. ot, der ayserner toyer'), and drops the bitter humour of the narrator's comment, 'der lager shteyt, hayst es, untern tsaykhn fun ironie'. This renders the narrative style more consistent, with less overt commentary from the narrator, and perhaps more acceptable for a text that is to enter the French market as literature, rather than 'just another' eyewitness testimony: bitter humour is not an expected hallmark of this style. What critics praise or condemn as the 'baldness' of Wiesel's style is clearly a product of the process of translation and editorial intervention that the text has undergone.<sup>22</sup>

Just before the extract quoted above, Wiesel describes the march from Birkenau to Auschwitz I in these terms:

a sheyner april-tog iz es geven. a frilings-reyekh in der luft. di zun hot gehaltn a kirtse poyse, eyder zi geyt zikh leygn in mayrev-zayt. a romantische shkie. kaynmol iz nokh di zun azoy kalt nisht geven tsu undz, kaynmol iz nokh der himl azoy vayt nisht geven fun undz, vi in dozikn tog. nishto mer kayn got in himl, hot geshepshtet der vint fun harts. nishto mer kayn got in himl un nishto mer kayn mentsh oyf der erd. der bashaf – in tsveyen zikh geshpoltn: eyn malakhei-mavet un eyn metim.

beynashmoshes. der eybiker kamf tsvishn tog un nakht, tsvishn likht un shatn. dosmol hot di nakht geziget on shum onstrengungen. (*velt* 83f.)

[It was a fine day in April. A spring breeze in the air. The sun took a short rest

before setting in the west. A romantic sunset. Never again was the sun so cold towards us, never again were the heavens so far from us, than on that day. No more God in heaven, whispered a breath from the heart. No more God in heaven and no more people on earth. Creation: sundered in half, without angels of death and without any dead.

Twilight. The eternal struggle between day and night, between light and shadow.

This time night was effortlessly victorious.]

It is perhaps not hard to see why an editor might wish to remove some of this commentary, which verges on the bathetic, in the name of the literary style that is being aimed for in the French edition. The transition to the French edition removes much of this commentary and search for significance, leaving the episode to ‘mean’ nothing more than the movement from one location to the next.

However, there are a couple of other consequences of this editorial decision. Firstly, the removal from the text of an account of a moment of religious crisis helps to focus the French text’s narrative of argument with God onto the narrator’s relationship with his father, strengthening one of the text’s key structural features. Secondly, there is another important stylistic consequence: the repeated phrases (‘nishto mer...nishto mer...’) echo in their rhetorical style the famous ‘moment of witnessing’ on the narrator’s arrival at Birkenau, which begins:

kaynmol vel ikh nisht fargesn oyf yene nakht, di ershte lager-nakht, velkhe hot mayn gants lebn in a langer nakht farvandlt.

kaynmol vel ikh nisht fargesn yenem roykh, velkher hot aroyfgebrakht mayn mame un tsiporahlen korbones farn himl. [*velt* 70]

[Never will I forget that night, the first camp-night, which transformed my whole life into a long night.

Never will I forget that smoke, which lifted my mother and Tsiporah as victims to heaven.]

The French has both intensified the description and removed the personal reflection on the death of family members:

Jamais je n'oublierai cette nuit, la première nuit de camp qui a fait de ma vie une nuit longue et sept fois verrouillée.

Jamais je n'oublierai cette fumée. [*Nuit 58*]

In the French, this passage stands out from the surrounding text in its style and direct address, and has usually been singled out as the key moment in the text's testimonial claim: an indelible memory, formulated as an eyewitness description, in an elevated, Biblical style synthesizing seeing and speaking into the moment of bearing witness in the text, and thus underscoring the unity of narrator and author. This is also how it functions in ...*un di velt*, but there it is embedded in a style in which such repeated, rhythmic invocations are not unusual. An understanding of what has been lost in the transition from Yiddish to French text shows us that the attention-grabbing *uniqueness* of this moment in the French narrative has been created by editorial intervention into the rhythms of Wiesel's Yiddish style. The French text's extraordinarily narrow narrative focus, whereby the mother and sisters simply vanish from the text after the family's separation at Birkenau, is also a product of the editing

process.

In the French text and the translations made from it, the sequence describing the arrival through the gate is spare and without commentary, ensuring that narrator's first impressions gain impact: 'Première impression: c'était mieux que Birkenau' (*Nuit* 68). However, the editing of the narratorial interventions is replaced by a commentary in the form of a change in the layout that intensifies the drama of the moment: where the Yiddish text leaves no space between the inmates' registering the sign over the gate and the description of the new camp, a line break has been inserted into the French account:

arbet makht frey!

der lager shteyt, hayst es, untern tsaykhn fun ironie.

oyshvits.

der ershter ayndruk: beser vi birkenau.

(*velt* 84)

'Le travail, c'est la liberté!'

Auschwitz.

Première impression: c'était mieux que Birkenau.

(*Nuit* 68)

Here, the emphasis is on the drama of arrival, centered on the naming of the camp, with all the associations that it brings with it, rather than on the narrating of a religious crisis. Meyer-Clason's translation simply continues a process of



dramatisation and literary re-working that had already begun in the French rewriting of ...*un di velt hot geshvign*. The following closer analysis will make this clearer.

### Restructuring the text

Since the translation of *La Nuit* is initially published alongside the two other texts, with the packaging suggesting a single text in three parts, as I have shown above, *Die Nacht* shows some significant interventions in the structure of the text: most importantly, the chapter divisions have all been removed, transforming the structured blocks of narrative in the French version, which reflected Lindon's view of the way Wiesel's text should be read, into a continuous text. This change has important consequences for reading, since the reader no longer interprets the text through the shape of the chapters, and there is no longer a hierarchy of section divisions.

An example will illustrate this. The chapters in the French text are sometimes structured around the physical progress of Eliézer and his father through the concentration camp system, and at other times around the inner narrative of religious doubt and argument. Chapter 4 begins with the arrival at Buna and ends with the account of the hanging of three prisoners, including the young 'pipel' of a Dutch Oberkapo who has been caught smuggling weapons. This sequence, which, since Mauriac drew attention to it in his 'Préface', has been one of the most frequently cited moments in Wiesel's work: the bitterly ironic parallel drawn between the execution of the innocent boy between two other prisoners and the crucifixion of Christ, accompanied by the narrator's comments, has been the focus of much interpretative commentary.

Derrière moi, j’entendis le même homme demander:

- Où donc est Dieu?

Et je sentais en moi une voix qui lui répondait:

- Où il est? Le voici – il est pendu ici, à cette potence... (*Nuit 95*)

The German version cannot render the important distinction between the main tense of the narrative in this section – *passé simple* – and the introduction of the *imparfait* at the moment at which Elieser perceives the inner voice:

Hinter mir hörte ich denselben Mann fragen:

“Wo ist Gott?”

Und ich hörte eine Stimme in mir antworten:

“Wo er ist? Dort – dort hängt er, am Galgen...” (*Nacht 95*)

The French text suggests that the inner voice is part of his *ongoing* religious development, while the single events around him are stages or milestones in the process. The distinction in the French between ‘entendis’ and ‘sentais’ also stresses an opposition between an external voice that is *heard*, and an inner one that is *felt*.

The fact that the chapter ends after the description of this event emphasises its significance further, and creates a break before the beginning of Chapter 5, which commences with the celebration of Rosh Hashanah in Buna. The German text, having dispensed with chapter divisions in favour of a simple line break, juxtaposes the account of the hanging with the Rosh Hashanah celebration more strongly, suggesting that the two accounts should be read as a commentary on each other, but should not

be given any special prominence in the narrative as a whole.

The loss of chapter divisions disrupts the hierarchy of significance in the events of the narrative, suggesting, for example, that the arrival at the Auschwitz *Stammlager*, which occurs towards the end of Chapter 3 (*Nuit* 68) is as significant as the narrator's religious crisis or as the celebration of Rosh Hashanah: thus, and through the dramatization of the arrival that I commented on above, the chronological progression of the narrative is emphasised over the inner story of the narrator and the rhythms of the liturgical year, both of which play some role in structuring the narrative.

### Stylistic interventions

The presence of the translator is felt throughout the text in implicit commentary on the experiences described by the narrator, and on the way in which they are rendered in the text. I would argue that this is a commentary that reflects the initial generic assignment of the text – that is, the stress on its 'literariness' – as well as the translator's feelings about what is being described, and a sense of what a Holocaust text *ought to be*. There are three elements to this commentary, reflecting different aspects of the translation strategy: dramatization, explanatory interpretation, and stylistic 'correction' (that is, making the text fit a conception of the 'literary'). I will deal with each in turn.

I have already shown how all of the translations – including the French text made from the Yiddish original – have tended to intensify the drama of particular events described in the text, ensuring that the narrative corresponds to what one would expect from an account of the Holocaust. Meyer-Clason's German translation extends

this strategy to the choice of lexis, often adding an extra layer of intensity to the description of a scene, or employing terms that ‘fit’ with the way events in the Holocaust are described.

For example, where the French text uses a neutral or administrative term, such as ‘déporter’, the German interprets it by making clear the reality behind it: ‘Son mari et ses deux fils aînés avaient été déportés avec le premier transport, par erreur’ (*Nuit* 44) becomes ‘Ihr Mann und zwei ältere Söhne waren versehentlich mit dem ersten Transport verfrachtet worden’ (*Nacht* 43). Similarly, where the French simply uses the terms ‘wagon’ (*Nuit* 154) to describe the means by which the prisoners are transported, the German has ‘Viehwagon’ (*Nacht* 139) which contains a strong commentary on the situation.

Similar instances of intensification are found frequently in the text: ‘La baraque où l’on nous avait fait entrer était très longue’ (*Nuit* 59) becomes ‘Man pferchte uns in eine lang gestreckte Baracke’ (*Nacht* 56), with the emphasis also changing from the description of the hut to the violence of the action. ‘Assis par terre’ (*Nuit* 69) becomes ‘Wir kauerten uns auf den Erdboden’ (*Nacht* 64); ‘Le son de la cloche nous rejeta dans la réalité’ (*Nuit* 108) becomes ‘Der Glockenton stieß uns unbarmherzlich in die Wirklichkeit zurück’ (*Nacht* 98), and ‘Les ordres nous étaient donné [sic] par haut-parleurs’ (*Nuit* 159) becomes ‘Lautsprecher bellten die Befehle’ (*Nacht* 143). These examples also indicate a tendency to play up the sense of the reduction of the prisoners to the level of animals.

Descriptions of people tend also to undergo the same treatment; in the French text, the narrator’s father ‘frissonnait’ (*Nuit* 166), while the German has ‘Er zitterte am ganzen Leib’ (*Nacht* 148). ‘Très pâle’ (*Nuit* 112) becomes ‘Leichenblass’ (*Nacht* 102) and, in a description of the father’s blank expression, the adjective ‘vaincu’ (*Nuit* 108)

is rendered as 'geschlagen, vernichtet' (*Nacht* 99), possibly also to avoid the potential ambiguity of 'geschlagen' in an account where descriptions of beatings are common.

A further strategy in the German translation consists in attempts to clarify or explain causal relations or expand the abrupt descriptive style of the French text. Wiesel's text is often characterised by unconnected simple sentences consisting only of main clauses or verbless clauses; he uses few relative clauses and tends to avoid adverbial phrases that suggest cause and effect or chronological relations. The translation often deals with these by making explicit the relations that the original only suggests.

Sometimes this is simply a question of inserting a verb in order to explain an action more fully. For example, in a description of the detainees' block at Birkenau, the sentence 'Au toit, quelques lucarnes bleutées' (*Nuit* 59) becomes 'Am Dach waren einige blau gefärbte Luken angebracht' (*Nacht* 56), which tends to soften the narrator's account of the extraordinary trauma and confusion of the arrival. Other examples show a desire to clarify potential ambiguities in terminology: thus, it may be that the possible German equivalent for 'allées' (*Nuit* 95), 'Alleen', was felt to be inappropriate to describe roads in a concentration camp, so this became the more technical 'Verbindungswege' (*Nacht* 87).

The German translation also tends to interpret the source text by inserting causal connections between incidents. Where the French text often presents events as a series of disconnected incidents, obliging the reader to make and question connections, the German text spells them out. In an account of the tattooing of the prisoners' arms as a sign of the Nazi attack on their identity, the French text states baldly, 'Je devins A-7713. Je n'eus plus désormais d'autre nom' (*Nuit* 70), whereas the German makes explicit the connection: 'Ich bekam die Nummer A-7713 und hatte damit keinen

Namen mehr' (*Nacht* 66). In a description of the life and death struggle that breaks out amongst starving deportees on a train when a worker throws them a piece of bread, the French text leaves the cause of the struggle implicit: 'Un jour que nous étions arrêtés, un ouvrier sortit de sa besace un bout de pain et le jeta dans un wagon. Ce fut une ruée' (*Nuit* 153). The German clarifies the cause: 'Als wir einmal anhielten, zog ein Arbeiter ein Stück Brot aus seinem Brotbeutel und warf es in einen Wagen, was einen Aufruhr verursachte' (*Nacht* 138). Since the narrator then goes on to discuss the morality of the worker's action in terms of whether an act of kindness can also constitute an act of cruelty, the slight ambiguity over whether the worker's action *caused* the violence is an important part of the way the incident is narrated.

That such interventions at the level of cause and effect can constitute an act of commentary by the translator can be shown in the introductory description of Madame Schächter, whose vision of fire and death disturbs the initial journey of the deportees to Auschwitz: 'Son mari était un homme pieux, passant ses jours et ses nuits dans la maison d'étude, et c'était elle qui travaillait pour nourrir les siens' (*Nuit* 44). By emphasizing the causal connection and adding the verb 'musste', the German text comments on the source: in place of a description that suggests the normality of this state of affairs for pious Hassidim, the translator transmits a sense of injustice about Schächter's situation: 'Ihr Mann war ein frommer Mensch, der Tag und Nacht im Lehrhaus verbrachte, sodass sie den Lebensunterhalt der Ihren erarbeiten musste' (*Nacht* 44).

In the last example, the presence of the translator commenting on the source text is clear; however, other examples show a desire to produce syntactical coherence in the text by quietly 'correcting' the abruptness of Wiesel's French and clarifying causal connections. Such interventions have a dramatic effect on the way experiences are

mediated through the narrator's observing consciousness, and tend to imply that his perception and understanding are coherent rather than fragmentary. For example, a description of the narrator's view of a doctor who treats him is presented as a series of disconnected observations reflecting a perception that is disjointed, but focussed intensely on the doctor: 'Il fit m'apporter de l'eau. Il souriait. Il se préparait à sortir, voir d'autres malades' (*Nuit* 124). The German alters this perspective for the sake of syntactical variety and fluency: 'Man brachte mir Wasser. Er lächelte und schickte sich an, seine anderen Patienten zu betreuen' (*Nacht* 113).

There are similar examples throughout the text, but one more will suffice in order to demonstrate the consequences of this strategy. A key theme in the text is the relationship between fathers and sons, and there are numerous examples showing how filial bonds are broken under the most extreme conditions. In one case, a son assaults his father for the sake of a scrap of bread:

Il avait sous sa veste un bout de pain. Avec une rapidité extraordinaire, il le retira, le parta à sa bouche. Ses yeux s'illuminèrent; un sourire, pareil à une grimace, éclaira son visage mort. Et s'éteignit aussitôt. Une ombre venait de s'allonger près de lui. Et cette ombre se jeta sur lui. (*Nuit* 154)

The translation emphasises the development of the action rather than the narrator's fragmentary perception of it:

Er hatte ein Stück Brot unter seine Jacke. Mit unglaublicher Geschwindigkeit zog er es hervor und führte es zum Munde. Seine Augen leuchteten, ein grimassenhaftes Lächeln erhellte sein Totengesicht und erlosch alsbald. Ein

Schatten hatte sich neben ihn gelegt und warf sich über ihn. (*Nacht* 139)

Additionally, however, the translation disrupts a narrative strategy of deliberate ambiguity: does the father's smile disappear because the son has attacked him, or because the son has come to sit by him and might ask to share the bread?

The translation is a response to *La Nuit* as literary text, designed to intervene in a literary debate at a particular moment in West German history. In doing so, it demonstrates an attitude towards the text that is in line with the interpretation set out by Martin Walser in his 'Vorwort', and with the publishing strategy that presents it as Part 1 of a literary trilogy. The translation does not refer to sources outside the French text, assuming by contrast with the English translations that the text is sufficient unto itself as a literary production. However, it does much of the reader's interpretive work, presenting a less fragmentary narrative voice and ensuring that our reading concentrates on the events described, rather than on their narrative mediation. In this way, the translation attempts to construct a text that fulfils the requirements for a new writing that synthesises political commitment with a particular view of literary quality.

## CONCLUSION

In translation, Wiesel's text is employed in arguments about the meaning of the Holocaust in a particular cultural context, whether as an extreme test case in a Catholic theology of suffering, an authentic example of a new committed literature, or a step in a journey of individual redemption. The translation considered here performs



its own commentary on the French text, supported in by an extra programmatic ‘Vorwort’, reflecting the contemporary purpose of the translation. Meyer-Clason’s German translation is a reading of *La Nuit* first and foremost as a literary work, reflecting a stage in the intense German literary engagement with National Socialism and the Holocaust in the 1960s.

The relevance and significance of a testimony is predicated on a complex set of ideas about its authenticity; as Hans-Joachim Hahn suggests, the generic assignment of a text as Holocaust testimony depends on the establishment of equivalence between narrator and author, text and experience.<sup>23</sup> This assumption will affect the writing and reading of texts, and, we may add, their translation: the translation will construct an implied relationship between text, author and experience, and between ‘testimony’ and ‘literature’, that is dependent on target culture conditions. In the case of *Die Nacht*, Walser’s piece positions the text as an intervention in a debate about the role of committed literature (with the emphasis on *literature*) and the authenticity of the victim’s voice at a time when West German society was only just beginning to be receptive to the voices of the non-German victims of the Holocaust.

Creating a sense of this authenticity in a translation entails engaging with a variety of target-culture requirements, including developing ideas about the appropriateness of particular genres and modes of reading. For example, the dramatic change in the labelling of the German translation from ‘Roman’ to ‘Erinnerung und Zeugnis’ reflects a changing context in which literary representations of the Holocaust, in the sense of the ‘engagierte Literatur’ of the 1960s, cede authority to a desire for a direct and supposedly unmediated connection with the witness.

Meyer-Clason’s translation emphasises the literariness of the text according to a conception of literature that requires smooth syntax and longer, more balanced and

syntactically more varied sentences than those that characterise Wiesel's French text. It also takes over some of the interpretive work for the reader, and leaves a trail of commentary in the text through dramatization and explication of causal relationships. This is translation as demonstration of an attitude towards Holocaust testimony, literature and the drama of witnessing that is tailored to target-culture conditions. Both Walser and Meyer-Clason put Wiesel's text to use in a committed attempt to challenge and change German discourse about the Holocaust, but in order to do so, they must first make it comprehensible in target-culture terms.

1 Elie Wiesel, *La Nuit*, Paris 1958. I also refer to the following translated editions: *Die Nacht: Erinnerung und Zeugnis*, tr. Curt Meyer-Clason, Freiburg 2008; *Night: His Record of Childhood in the Death Camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald*, tr. Stella Rodway, London 1981. Further references to these editions appear in the text as *Nuit*, *Nacht*, and *Night*, respectively.

2 Ellen S Fine, *Legacy of Night: the Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel*, Albany 1982, p. 9.

3 Terrence des Pres, 'Foreword' to Fine, p. xiii.

4 Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*, Ithaca, NY 2004, p. 36.

5 Weissman, p. 39. Kazin's review of *Night* is collected in Alfred Kazin, *Contemporaries*, London 1963, pp. 296-300.

6 See Wiesel, *Tous les fleuves vont à la mer: mémoires I*, Paris 1994, p. 378; on the generic confusion surrounding the English translations of *La Nuit*, see Weissman, p. 67.

7 Hans Otto Horch, 'Grauen und Groteske: Zu Edgar Hilsenraths Romanen', Jens Stüben and Winfried Woesler (eds), *Wir tragen den Zettelkasten mit den Steckbriefen unserer Freunde'. Beiträge jüdischer Autoren zur deutschen Literatur seit 1945*, Darmstadt 1993, pp. 213-26 (p. 217).

8 *Tous les fleuves*, p. 114.

9 See Theo Hermans, 'Translation, irritation and resonance', in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, ed. by Alexandra Fukari and Michaela Wolf, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 57-75.

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10 Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, Seattle 2001, p. 5.

11 Eliezer Vizl [Elie Wiesel], ...*un di velt hot geshvign*, Buenos Aires 1956. I have endeavoured to transliterate Wiesel's Yiddish text using the YIVO Standard Romanisation system. References to this edition are given in the text as *velt*. My English translations of Wiesel's Yiddish text appear in square brackets after the quotations.

12 *Tous les fleuves*, p. 451.

13 *Tous les fleuves*, p. 333. A variety of origin stories are in circulation regarding ...*un di velt hot geshvign*, which take their cue from Wiesel's own contradictory statements on the matter: did he write the text spontaneously in 1954, or did he write it only after experiencing the committed support of François Mauriac? Each version suggests a different view of the testimonial impetus: was it an expression of the irresistible return of repressed traumatic memories, or was it from the beginning bound up with questions of readership and communicative context?

14 In 1996, an article by Naomi Seidman attracted some controversy for its comments on the transition from the Yiddish to the French text: Seidman argues that the texts are written for different audiences, and that *La Nuit* represents a falsification of the angry, vengeful political stance of the original in the name of appealing to a Gentile readership that prefers its Jews passive and suffering nobly, accusing God rather than accusing the murderers and bystanders: Naomi Seidman, 'Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage', *Jewish Social Studies*, 3 (1996), 1–19. Seidman's article was an important step towards an understanding of the complexity of the origins of *La Nuit*, and the accusations of Holocaust revisionism that she attracted were entirely unfounded; however, her suggestion that the text is a deliberate falsification of an

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unambiguous and unmediated original does not get to grips with the complexity of the processes of translation and mediation that the texts have undergone.

15 Elie Wiesel, *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa. Mit Vorreden von Martin Walser und François Mauriac*, Munich 1962, tr. Curt Meyer-Clason.

16 In this context, one could also consider the willingness of German readers to accept the Auschwitz stories of Tadeusz Borowski as fiction, whereas they have often been read in English as testimony: see Peter Davies, 'The Obligatory Horrors: Translating Tadeusz Borowski's Holocaust Narratives into German and English', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 14/2 (2008), 23–40.

17 See Elie Wiesel, *Night, Dawn, The Accident: Three Tales*, New York 1972, tr. Stella Rodway, Frances Frenaye, Anne Borchardt respectively; *The Night Trilogy*, New York 1987. The more recent editions change the title of the third text to *Day*, to emphasise the unity of the 'trilogy'. The most recent edition replaces Rodway's translation of *La Nuit* with a new version by Marion Wiesel: Elie Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy: Consisting of a Memoir, translated by Marion Wiesel, and two Novels*, New York 2008. Marion Wiesel's new translation of *La Nuit* was first published in 2006: Elie Wiesel, *Night*, New York 2006, tr. Marion Wiesel.

18 *Die Nacht: Roman*, Gütersloh 1980, tr. Curt Meyer-Clason.

19 *Die Nacht: Roman*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1996, tr. Curt Meyer-Clason.

20 Elie Wiesel, 'Ohne Schande: offener Brief von Elie Wiesel an Martin Walser', *Die Zeit*, 10 December 1998.

21 *Der Spiegel* 9/1963, 'Neu erschienen: Elie Wiesel, *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa*'.

22 French-language critics have tended to debate the literary value of the text first and foremost, indicating a similar set of preoccupations to those demonstrated in Meyer-

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Clason's translation, and making an interesting contrast with the reception of the English translation. See, for example, Vincent Engel, *Fou de Dieu ou le Dieu des fous: l'oeuvre tragique d'Elie Wiesel*, Brussels 1989. Engel argues (p. 22) that it is precisely the *literary* quality of *La Nuit* that ensures its survival in the marketplace.

23 Hans-Joachim Hahn, *Repräsentationen des Holocaust: Zur westdeutschen Erinnerungskultur seit 1979*, Heidelberg 2005, p. 33.